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Vol. 8th p. 315.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN KNILL;

A LITTLE BOY

WHO DIED OF THE CHOLERA,

IN

ST. PETERSBURG,

July 1, 1831.

Knill, Richard

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE AND PARKER,
No. 9, Cornhill.
NEW YORK:—H. C. SLEIGHT,
Clinton Hall.
1832.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This little book contains an account of a lovely boy who was taken very suddenly from his parents during the late prevalence of the Cholera in Russia. It was sent to this country for publication, and now appears with a testimonal to its correctness, and a brief account of the well-known and respected author, from an American resident in St. Petersburg. The account has been translated into the German and Russian languages; but from want of means had not been printed. It is hoped that the friends of Mr. Knill, and of Sabbath Schools in this country will contribute towards the printing and circulation of the narrative in Russia, by their favorable reception and purchase of it here. The subscriber has used his endeavors to dispose of the M. S. so as to secure the greatest possible benefit to the Author consistent with its extensive sale. The avails of the Book will be sent immediately to Russia, to aid its appearance in the above mentioned languages.

N. A.

Cambridge, June 1, 1832.

A letter from the Rev. Mr. Knill *to a friend in America inclosing the account of his son.*

SAREPTA HOUSE,
St. Petersburg, 13—25 Oct. 1831.

Dear Christian Friend,

Our beloved children cannot answer your letter for Samuel is not able to write, and John and Joseph are in their graves. You know what an eventful time we have had! Thro' the tender mercy of our God we are now pretty well, and I trust it is our desire to live unto Him who raised us up from the bed of languishing.

It has been a great relief to our spirits to write a narrative of our dear John. My wife has written one part of it and the other part of it was written by me. We send you this joint epistle—in lieu of a letter from our boys.

This narrative is already translated into German and it is now going through a translation into Russian. Perhaps we shall be able to print it—and thus our child may be the means of animating and encouraging Parents—and of doing good to children also—and peradventure for the turning of some sinners from the error of their ways. As far as I know my own heart and the heart of my partner, I think I can say—we have no desire to live but to advance the glory of God—and this was our strongest desire for our children. And now John is dead, we wish him to speak to our fellow men.

Farewell,

Your affectionate

RICHARD and SARAH KNILL.

Letter from an American gentleman formerly in St. Petersburg.

"The Rev. Richard Knill, father of the lovely boy who is the subject of this memorial, —was born in Devon in England, and studied under the Rev. Dr. Bogue preparatory to going as a missionary to India. He went out to South Travancore under the patronage of the London Missionary Society,—but his health became so enfeebled, that the only hope of his recovery was in returning to a colder climate, and he landed in England about two years from his leaving it. A year before this period, the Rev. Mr. Swan, who was then on his way to the mission in Siberia, was in St. Petersburg and administered the sacrament for a year to the little church which was afterwards

under Mr. Knill's charge. Mr Knill was advised to try the climate of Russia and the Missionary Society engaged him to go to St. Petersburg and commence regular pastoral labors there. He did not arrive until after Mr. Swan had left for Selinginsk in Siberia. The number of communicants at St. Petersburg was then very small,—but it gradually increased, and now,—ten years from its commencement, it numbers about sixty living members in addition to a number who have removed to other parts of the empire and some to other countries. Mrs. Knill was born in Russia of English Parents. They have had four children—the eldest Julia, named for their greatly beloved friend Mrs. Patterson, wife of Dr. Patterson, died very suddenly a few years since. She was an uncommonly lovely child. John and Joseph were taken away by the Cholera within three days of each other. Samuel only now remains. He is an interesting child of seven years and the hopes of his parents are fixed on him. The

writer of this notice was intimately acquainted with this interesting family and resided in it during the prevalence of the Cholera and followed the lovely children to the tomb. He testifies to the peculiarly interesting character of little John who was indeed an uncommon child and bid fair to be a great blessing to his parents.

The writer thinks that Mr. Knill has been rather over-careful in speaking of the religious feelings of his son. The mind of this child was of quick discernment, and it seems certain that he must have had some correct views and some most interesting exercises on the subject of religion. It is recollected that his appearance while he was putting the very serious question respecting Mrs. Chapman, to his father, was that of great thought and solemnity, and was more like a youth of fifteen than a child of four years.——The death of the lovely children made a sad breach in this little family. Ever since little Julia died, the parents

always have sung the hymn at their morning devotions on Wednesday of each week which they had sung on the morning of her death. They continued this practice, but it brings too vividly to mind the recollection of their beloved children, for their peace, although they have bowed with resignation to the afflictive stroke of death. May that God who binds the broken hearts heal their wounds, and make this little notice of a beloved child the means of good to some who shall read it."

MEMOIR.

More than fourteen years have rolled away since the Cholera has been wasting the earth. It first made its appearance near Calcutta in the East Indies, from whence its fatal influence spread rapidly from province to province over the whole of that interesting country. It turned nearly every house into a house of mourning, and in many every inmate died. The rich were not spared, but it raged chiefly among the poor. Foreigners, as well as natives became its victims—and after it had hurried *millions* to the grave, it travelled westward to Persia. From Persia it crossed the Russian Frontier, and in

1824 it commenced its ravages in Astrachan.—About the month of July 1830 it broke out *a second time* in Astrachan, and in a few weeks carried off several thousands of its inhabitants. The chief men of the city died of it! When the disease was at its height more than five hundred persons died in a day—and so difficult was it to procure graves for them, that about one thousand bodies were buried together in a large pit.

At the close of the same year, the Cholera reached Moscow, and its effects produced a dreadful panic on the minds of the people. In this season of deep distress the emperor of Russia did not hesitate to console and aid his afflicted subjects; and after continuing with them until the malady began to abate, he returned to St. Petersburg, and was restored to his anxious and loving family in peace.

When the disease was raging in Mos-

cow, great fears wers excited respecting it in St. Petersburg, and great preparations were made to prevent its entrance, or to stop its progress if it came—but no symptoms of it appeared for many months. At last it came! and an awful calamity has it been to multitudes. The tears of thousands are still flowing, and will long flow, over husbands and wives and parents and children, who were suddenly snatched from the fond embrace of their beloved relatives. Indeed none can conceive but those who have felt it, what a calamity this disease has been.

It broke out in St. Petersburg on the fourteenth day of June, old style.* In the evening of that day it was reported

* The young reader must ask his parent or teacher, the meaning of Old Style. The 14th day of June in Russia is the 26th day of June in America. If you look at the top of Mr. Knill's letter on the 5th page, you will see it dated the 13—25 of October. The way in which time is reckoned in America is called New Style. New Style is 12 days later than Old Style. When Mr. Knill wrote his letter it was the 13th of October in Russia; by adding 12, he found that it was the 25th day in America; therefore he dated his letter 13—25 October. The Cholera therefore broke out the 14—26 day of June, that is: it was the 14th day of the month in Russia and the 26th with us.
EDITOR.

that a man belonging to a bark had been attacked with Cholera. This was the commencement of the malady, and it increased at a fearful rate until its ravages became tremendous. When the disease was at its height several hundred in a day were attacked, the greater part of whom never recovered. By this time business of every kind was nearly at a stand, and this beautiful city was converted into one vast hospital, in some streets scarcely any thing was seen *moving*, but funeral processions—man going to his long home; and the mourners, *very few* mourners, following their friends to the house appointed for all living. About the beginning of July the number of deaths gradually diminished—and at the latter end of that month, the disease had nearly disappeared.

John Knill, the lovely boy whose death is here recorded, was three years and eleven months old. It will be seen

that the Cholera had been raging in the city for several days—but we had no fears that our children would be affected with it, for we had been informed that it was chiefly confined to adults—but painful experience has since taught us that it is not confined to sex nor age. The prince and the peasant—the man of grey hairs and the child of a year old have fallen beneath its fatal stroke.

On the evening preceding his death, John retired to rest in his usual health. When the Cholera attacked him it seemed to seize his heart, and to oppress the vitals with increasing violence until he expired. His hands and feet almost immediately became cold. His sparkling eyes sunk deep into their sockets. The pulse nearly ceased, and a peculiar degree of languor seized his whole body. In this state of exhaustion he looked around upon his affectionate mother and friends with indescribable tenderness—

and then amidst our tears, and sighs and prayers, and efforts of no common nature, he ceased to breathe. *He was attacked in the morning---died at noon---and in the evening was carried to his grave!* Thus suddenly was this flower cut down! Thus quickly did Death execute his commission---Thus in one short day all our *earthly hopes* respecting him were blasted; but we have hopes that will flourish forever!

His bereaved parents have a thousand fond recollections of what he did and said, but there are *six things*, which we trust will be beneficial to some who may read this short narrative.

1st. His early co-operation in circulating the holy scriptures and tracts.

He was not quite two years old when the following circumstance took place. A Glazier was mending my window, and John and his brother, and their nurse stood by looking at him. While the

man was busy at his work, this little boy pulled him by the apron and said to him, "Brother," the usual salutation among Russians---"Brother, can you read?" At first the man took no notice of the child, but finding him continue his prattle he said to the nurse, "Does the child speak to me?" "Yes,"—"What does he want?"—"Listen to him." The child then repeated the question, "Brother, can you read?" "Yes," replied the man, "Have you a New Testament?" The man answered "*No.*" As soon as John found that the Glazier had not a Testament, he walked to the room in which they were kept, and having obtained one, carried it to him immediately. The nurse seeing what was done remarked, "John, you have not done this properly; you ought to have found a verse for the man to read---"Yes, yes," said he, and in turning over the leaves he pointed to

that striking passage, "When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and shut the door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly." Matt. 6: 6. "Well," said the man, "this is strange indeed!"

These questions the child frequently heard addressed to persons who came to our house, but we had no idea of his adopting the same plan of his own accord. It shews us at what an early age children are capable of imitating the examples around them: and fathers and mothers may learn from it what a tremendous responsibility it attaches to the parental character.

Since the above period many hundreds of people have come to our house, some for books, others for clothes &c., but I do not recollect that ever John saw any of these people without asking either his mother or myself, "may

I give that person a tract?" and sometimes without our knowledge he has supplied them.

Only the day before he died I received a package of Tracts, in the German and French Languages, from the Tract Society in London, and one of his last acts was to assist his brother in bringing these tracts to me, to the place where I wished to put them. His words still sound in my ears, as he approached me with his arms full, and his face bright with joy, saying, "Here, papa, see how many I bring!"

Parents who read this will, we trust, be encouraged to lead their children early into those ways which conduct to *usefulness* as well as *happiness*. Impressions made on the minds of children are generally deep and lasting. Good habits early formed are of immense advantage through life. The voice of wisdom says, "train up a child in the way

he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." This may he considered as a general rule—and daily observation confirms it as an interesting fact. We wished to be guided by this rule in the education of our offspring. Our heart's desire for them was that they might be always occupied in diffusing the knowledge of God. And now John is removed from our feeble instruction to a higher school, we are thankful that he had begun to do something for the good of mankind.

2ndly. I notice his interesting dream.

It is difficult to determine the nature of dreams—to describe exactly how the mind can be engaged in travelling, conversing, fighting, reading, preaching, praying and the like, when the senses are locked up in sleep; but so it is, and it will generally be found that dreams are an index of the heart. "Filthy dreamers," as the Apostle calls them,

are generally those whose hearts when awake delight in iniquity: while on the other hand, the man who dreams of heaven, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and other sacred subjects, is the man whose waking hours are spent in communion with God. No doubt there are exceptions to this general rule. Perhaps "*the evil one*" has much influence on the minds of men when they are asleep---but if ever a good thought comes into our minds whether asleep or awake, we must give God the praise. "If a dream suggest a profitable hint we should receive it with gratitude. Assuredly, were our hearts more holy, both our waking and sleeping thoughts would be more heavenly."

Our little boy was just three years old, when we heard him speaking in his sleep. Of course we were anxious to discover what was the subject of conversation, and to our astonishment he re-

peated with uncommon emphasis these beautiful lines,

"What shall I render to my God,"
"For all his gifts to me?"

He had not been taught these lines, but his mother had been teaching them to his elder brother, a few days before, when he heard them, and treasured them up in his retentive memory, and now they were occupying his sleeping hours. O how sweet is the reflection that he never learned any thing from us, to our knowlege, which we should be ashamed to have him repeat before the Judgment-seat of Christ,—and how favored is the lot of those dear children who can say

"While others early learn to swear,
"And curse and lie and steal;
"Lord *I am taught* thy name to fear,
"And do thy holy will."*

* I have leave to mention a pleasing anecdote similar to this, of another young person who also had great desires for the conversion of sinners. He was taken sick sometime after he was thought to have become a Christian. His mother, at night, left a cane near his bed, and told him to knock, if he waked, and needed any thing. In the night the mother heard a loud knocking, and hastened to his chamber, but her son was asleep though the cane was in his hand, and he still continued knocking. At last he cried out in his sleep, "I can't make sinners hear!"
EDITOR.

Many dear children who will read these lines are blessed with pious parents whose chief desire is to train them for heaven. O children! do not disappoint their fond affections.

3dly. I shall state his manner of giving reproofs.

John was very playful and noisy, while his disposition was exceedingly sweet—though resolute and determined. He had two brothers, one younger and the other older. To his younger brother he would readily yield up any thing and say, "O Joseph! he is only a baby, he must have it"—but with his elder brother there was frequently an argument respecting their playthings—and when John thought his brother was wrong, he would say very gravely, "Ah Samuel! *God does not love that—Christ does not love that.*"

Every morning when they came to breakfast table, they repeated the com-

mandment, "Honor thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."---and when they perceived any thing in each others conduct which was contrary to this command, they would frequently remind each other by saying "Honor thy father and thy mother."

It is a solemn thought that almost every action of some men's lives is displeasing to God. Had these persons a a kind and faithful monitor near them, he would say to them a thousand times in a day, "Ah Sir! God does not love that. Ah Madam! Christ does not love that." And is it not dreadful to live a life of constant rebellion against our Creator and Redeemer! Dear Reader, try yourself by this touchstone. Ask yourself often, "will God be pleased with this part of my conduct?---will Christ approve this conversation? Shall I be able to give a good account of this act before

the Judgment-seat?"—and if *conscience* says "no"---if your *Bible* says "*no*," then reject it. Put it away from you. Flee from it as from a serpent. The Plague is dreadful, but sinning against God is much more dreadful; for that will ruin both body and soul. Hear the words of the Saviour on this point, "I say unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do---but I will forwarn you whom you shall fear---fear him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell, yea I say unto you fear Him!"

4th. This little boy was remarkable for his tenderness to animals.

Two instances of this shall suffice. During the last winter a servant was putting the housedog into the snow, and trying to cover it over. John looked through the window and saw it, and became quite agitated. He immediately

ran to his mother exclaiming "Mamma! Eupheme will kill the dog, come and prevent it." He then returned to the window watching the process, and appeared ready to faint. His mother interposed and liberated the dog, and now the joy of the child was as great as his previous grief.

A few days before his death he was walking on the wharf with his brothers when he saw a man beating his horse with great cruelty. They were near the watchbox---and John leaving his companions ran to the watchman and said "Please to look at that naughty man ---seize him and take him to the watch-house. A man who beats his horse *so*, ought not to have a horse."---These were fine feelings for a child, and such as every one ought to cultivate. We have seen young people inclined to be very hard-hearted to animals, but we hope that henceforth it will not be so---

but that the example of John Knill will be a profitable lesson to them and that tenderness to animals, will make a striking feature of their remaining lives.

5th. We notice his observations respecting a departed Christian.

Mrs. Chapman died four days before this dear child. She was formerly the Mistress of a Lancasterian School in Canada. About three years since she came to St. Petersburg to take charge of a school on the same system, in which she gave great satisfaction. Her heart was much set on doing good to the children of her charge, and we hoped that she would long be spared to be a blessing in her important sphere---but on Friday the 26th of June, old style, she was attacked with Cholera---a fatal day in St. Petersburg---for among the hundreds of persons who were this day attacked, it is supposed that a very few recovered. She struggled until four the next morning, and then entered into the

joy of her Lord. She left a delightful testimony to the love and faithfulness of God. Her Saviour was very precious to her. His rod and his staff comforted her. In the evening of the same day she was buried in the ground appointed expressly for those who died of Cholera ---and my dear little boy was afterwards placed with her in the same grave.

I mentioned some particulars respecting this pious woman to my family. John listened—and after pausing sometime, he said to me, "Papa, is Mrs. Chapman dead?" yes, my dear. "Then she is gone to heaven, Papa." Yes--- "Then she is with Christ, Papa."---yes my dear. "O! that is very good."--- These were delightful observations for a child under four years of age---yet I have no idea that he knew any thing about the nature of religion.* He fre-

* See the letter prefixed to the Memoirs on the 9th page. It is probable that the reader will form a different opinion from that here expressed by Mr. Knill. ED.

quently made striking remarks to his mother, and to his pious nurse, and sometimes he came and clasped me round the neck and said, "Papa, *I love God. I love Christ*"---and would then walk off singing "Lord in the morning thou shalt hear, my voice ascending high,"---but these things I consider merely as good habits---*the seeds*, which by the grace of God would have sprung up, if he had lived; but he knew nothing of man being a sinner, and Christ being the only Saviour. He could not comprehend it. I have heard and read of children of his age who appeared to possess religion, but I believe my child knew nothing about it. The observations I have made, are to show how far good teaching, and good example will go, to form good habits, and good modes of thinking in a child---and I pray that every Parent who may read this, may feel a fresh inducement to sow good

seed in the minds of their offspring, before the soil is pre-occupied.

Parents! remember, that to instill one good thought---to produce one good desire, in the heart of your child, is infinitely more important than the discovery of a gold mine. No mortal can conceive what blessings may flow from it, both in this world, and in that which is to come!

The last thing I shall notice respecting this dear child is the gracious Providence of God over-ruling the solemn events of his death, for a peculiar blessing to a young man who witnessed his agonies.

The evening before he died we had two friends with us, one from America, and a young friend from England.---On retiring to rest, John came and embraced his American friend, and with a lovely smile said, "Good night my dearest Mr. ----;" and he shook hands with our other

friend. They never saw him again until he was seized. When the alarm was given that he was attacked with Cholera, we were watching around the bed of his brother Joseph who had been dying all the preceding night---but now the necessities of John called for every help that could be given him---therefore I was left with the dying child, to moisten his parched lips, while his mother and the servants hastened to John.

Our young friend perceiving the child in great distress, sat down by his bedside, and for sometime assisted in rubbing his hands; then he ran to the Apothecary's for medicine---but on his return he found that medicine could be of no service---the spasms had ceased---the sufferings were over---the heart no longer palpitated, the spirit of our child was gone!

The suddenness of his death produced amazement and alarm. The scene was

truly awful. The shock which it gave to every one of us cannot be described. At this moment our young friend returned, and so deeply impressed was he with what he saw, that he entered his closet and shut the door, and cried unto that God and Saviour whose redeeming love and mercy, he had never truly sought before. I quote his own words, which he spake to me almost the last time I ever saw him. "Ah Sir! the day on which your John died, will ever be a memorable day to me. It will form a new era in my existence. I shall look back to it at the time when I became truly in earnest about my soul. I had often *seen* the importance of religion before, but then I felt the absolute need of it. I have been brought up with religious people, and have read, and seen and heard much on religious subjects---but *I never felt it before*. This was penetrating work. Indeed I was greatly afraid.

I thought it not improbable but that I may be cut off as suddenly as John, and then what will be the consequence! where shall I appear? I have no hope. I must trifle no longer. I then sought retirement. I went into your study, and there remained for about two hours, and I trust I was sincere in seeking mercy of the Lord, and in yielding up myself to be his servant forever."

O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Our child had been the subject of our constant prayers, but we never once implored riches, or honors, or earthly glory for him. Our prayer was, that like another John, he might "be great in the sight of the Lord---and turn many of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"---and such is our conviction of *the worth of souls* that we should have considered it an

unspeakable privilege, if after a long life of arduous toil, he had been the instrument of bringing one sinner to Jesus. O then, what a consolation to our wounded spirits to be permitted to hope that this work so glorious---a sinner brought to Jesus---was in a way hastened by his early death. To God be the glory forever!

It is a very alarming circumstance that vast multitudes live day after day like the young man just mentioned---without paying any regard to their souls; and though conscious that this important point is neglected, yet still go on procrastinating, until it is too late. Dreadful infatuation! Perhaps some persons, both young and old, may read these pages, who are precisely in this state---they are not prepared to meet their Judge---they know not the blessedness of the man whose sins are pardoned---they are not justified by faith, and con-

sequently have not obtained peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord---and can there be a case more alarming than this!

Dear Reader! Suppose that in this unprepared state you should be seized with some affliction, which should bring you suddenly to the grave.

O what consequences must follow!---when Infants or young children die, we know that they are happy, for "of such is the kingdom of God."---But when a man or woman dies, the case is very different; we look for evidence of repentance, and faith, before we can entertain hope respecting them---and where would *you* appear?

Ah! you would be left without a friend---without remedy, without hope.

Listen then, O listen to the voice of friendship.---Delay not another moment.---Let the great work of religion from this day become the grand business

of your life---*Salvation you must obtain or you will perish.* Salvation is offered to you freely. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He casts out none who come to him.

O then study the character and the work of Christ.---Behold the neccessity, and the suitableness of his atonement! ---Embrace this adorable Saviour---Believe on him and you shall be saved.

Finally, I beseech you, do not put off the momentous concerns of eternity until you are attacked with disease--- you will have no time then!

Therefore "let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men who wait for their Lord, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching!!"

THE END.

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Memoir of John Knil
boy who died of the ch
St. Petersburg, July 1,

Smith, Pitt & memorial

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